



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE

SENATOR JAMES B. ELDRIDGE
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Chair
JOINT COMMITTEE ON REVENUE
Vice Chair
JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
JOINT COMMITTEE ON STATE ADMINISTRATION AND
REGULATORY OVERSIGHT

DISTRICT OFFICE
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June 10, 2025

The Honorable Rebecca L. Rausch
Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Municipalities
and Regional Government
State House, Room 215
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Jack P. Lewis
House Chair, Joint Committee on Municipalities
and Regional Government
State House, Room 452
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Honorable Chairs

I write to you in support of S.1443, *An Act providing for the establishment of sustainable water resource funds*, and respectfully request that the committee report the bill favorably.

S.1443 empowers municipalities to responsibly manage their water resources by giving them the authority to collect a reasonable fee to be used to offset the impacts that water withdrawals and discharges have on the natural environment. Local communities have the most familiarity with their water resources, and the consequences of their misuse. Therefore, granting local governments the power to utilize financial tools will enable effective conservation projects and policies, and support a healthy, plentiful water supply for the Commonwealth.

This legislation would also support municipalities in maintaining their water infrastructure, a significant challenge throughout Massachusetts. According to the most recent State Auditor's report and the 2012 report of the Massachusetts Water Infrastructure Finance Commission, Massachusetts communities face a \$17-\$21 billion funding gap to address clean water and drinking water. To date, the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust has financed approximately \$8.25 billion for nearly three hundred borrowers, serving 97% of the Commonwealth's population. Unfortunately, that still leaves a \$13 billion gap. Stormwater

infrastructure is also in dire need, with municipalities requiring \$18 billion for maintenance and updates. This stress is compounded by the need for stormwater systems to make expensive repairs in order to comply with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits under the federal Clean Water Act and Combined Sewer overflows. Further, water usage, drainage, and treatment are all complicated by the increased rain, rising sea levels, and extreme weather events caused by climate change, as well as contaminants such as PFAS. The Commonwealth has been presented with a myriad of nuanced and expensive water challenges. Collecting a local fee to offset the costs of water use will aid municipalities as they rise to the occasion.

Our water sources are central to every aspect of our wellbeing from the health and wellbeing of our families to the success of the economy and natural beauty of our communities. Water banking at the local level has proven to be an effective tool for mitigating the impacts of water withdrawals on both the natural environment and local and regional water infrastructure systems. Granting municipalities the authority to collect a reasonable fee also grants them the opportunity to use effective economic tools and localized knowledge to protect our most critical resource.

I respectfully request that the committee allow this bill to proceed favorably. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

James B. Eldridge

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James B. Eldridge". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

State Senator

Middlesex & Worcester District